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This study tested the following hypothesis: that the study of original music composition confers benefits on the college music student which he would not ordinarily receive from the undergraduate music program, and that such study would therefore be a valuable addition to a music curriculum. Seven participants at a 3-week workshop in composition held at Kansas State Teachers College in the summer of 1968 took part in a brief, intensive composition course at a level commensurate with their ability and experience. Their completed works were performed by competent players and discussed by the workshop director, the students, and two composers. Evaluation sessions about the values of the composition study were held at the end of the workshop, and the following February, each participant completed a questionnaire rating his own growth, as a result of the workshop, in 10 specified musical areas. These discussions and questionnaire replies supported the original hypothesis, especially in the areas of understanding the essential nature of music and the creative process. Opinion was divided on making composition a requirement in the music curriculum: some participants recommended removing present requirements to accomodate a composition course, while others felt the course should remain optional. (Author/LH)

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FINAL REPORT

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A STUDY OF THE VALUES OF ORIGINAL COMPOSITION IN THE TRAINING OF PUBLIC SCHOOL MUSIC TEACHERS

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Emporia, Kansas 66801

March 1969

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The author wishes to acknowledge the contributions of three men, without whose efforts the Composition Workshop on which this study is based could not have taken place.

Mr. B. A. Nugent, Chairman of the Music Department at the Kansas State Teachers College, who originated the idea for the workshop, and whose suggestions formed the basis for the project. The others are the two visiting composers, Mr. Ingolf Dahl of the University of Southern California and Dr. Grant Beglarian of the Contemporary Music Project and of the Music Educators National Conference, both of whom gave unstintingly of their time and energy to the project and to the participating students.

SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to test the following hypothesis: that the study of original musical composition confers benefits on the college music and music education student above and beyond those he ordinarily receives from the usual undergraduate music program, and that such study would therefore be a valuable addition to the Bachelor of Music and Music Education curricula.

The test vehichle was a three-week workshop in composition held at the Kansas State Teachers College during the summer of 1968. Each participant in this workshop was afforded the opportunity for a brief but intensive course in composition at a level commensurate with his ability and experience in this area. All completed works were performed by competent players and discussed by the workshop students and director, and by two eminent composers, Ingolf Dahl and Grant Beglarian. In addition, the visiting composers gave seminars and public lectures discussing broader aspects of composition and of twentieth century music, so that the workshop participants were given as extensive a compositional experience as possible in the relatively brief period.

At the close of the workshop were held discussion sessions on the general and particular values of composition study for the music student and teacher, and during the following February (1969), each participant was asked to complete a questionnaire on the benefits to him, in the light of his experience and reflections in the meantime, of the workshop experience, and of his other composition study, if any. While the sampling represented by the workshop participants was not as large or as varied as was hoped (all but one were composers of some previous experience), their discussions and questionnaire replies do strongly support the original hypothesis that composition study benefits overall musical competence, especially in the areas of 1) understanding of the essential nature of music and 2) understanding and appreciation of the creative process. Opinions were divided on the question of requiring composition for all music students, especially in view of the crowded curriculum in music education. Some participants believed creative work to be the most important experience of their own musical training and recommended that other required courses be removed to make room for it; others felt that composition should remain optional and be given only to a selected group.

The results of the study can be summarized as follows: Reactions of this group of musicians strongly support the hypothesis that the study of composition has unique benefits to at least a certain segment of music students, but they give only qualified support to the requirement of such study for all undergraduate music majors.

From this study it seems evident that the values of creative efforts in music are well established in the beliefs of persons who have participated in such efforts, but that the best procedures and methods for harvesting these values for all music students remain to be established and disseminated.

INTRODUCTION

One of the current major concerns of college music departments in the United States is the nature and content of the courses in music theory required of all music students. These courses are designed to give the prospective music teacher, performer, composer, or musicologist a "liberal education in music," on which the subsequent more specialized studies are based. They ordinarily include work in harmony, ear-training, musical analysis, and music history.

Much criticism has been directed in recent years at the methods and materials of these courses and at the results obtained from them. Briefly stated, the criticisms claim the deficiencies: a) lack of breadth. The harmony and history courses often do not adequately cover music written before and after the common practice period of the 18th and 19th centuries; b) inadequate standards of musicianship. The performance skills of students in the areas of sight-singing, musical dictation, and keyboard harmony rarely progress beyond elementary levels; c) lack of creative activity. The student seldom is required to exercise his own imaginative powers; and d) lack of opportunity for synthesis. The theory courses as a group usually do not lead to a comprehensive view of the musical art, and a synthesis of the general and the specialized areas of musical studies rarely occurs.

A frequently offered suggestion for alleviation of these shortcomings is the study of composition for all music students. Proponents of this view state that original musical thinking is the best culmination, even adjunct, of theoretical studies, and that only by this means can the student achieve to his capacity in many now inadequately covered areas.

Since this suggestion, although much discussed, has not been widely followed, it was felt that a brief, but intensive period of study of composition by a representative group of upper division students, graduate students, and active music teachers could be utilized as a test project. A three-week workshop in composition was accordingly planned for the summer of 1968 at the Kansas State Teachers College. It was hoped that the workshop participants would come from a broad spectrum of students from the standpoint of previous compositional experience. These students were given the best possible environment for creative work, eg., adequate time to compose, review of their works by both the workshop director and by visiting composers, and performance of all completed pieces by professional caliber players.

At the close of the project, the students participated in general discussions of the worth of the creative experience. After the elapsed time of one semester, each student was

asked to note his growth in specific musical areas as a result of the workshop as well as his previous compositional activity. These discussions and self-ratings furnish the principal data for the findings of this report. In general, they strongly support the idea that composition can be valuable to any musician or music teacher, but are not yet helpful in determining the means of introducing this study to the undergraduate curricula.

METHODS

General Design

The Composition Workshop for Teachers and Composers was held at the Kansas State Teachers College July 15 to August 2, 1968. This workshop was the test vehicle for ascertaining the growth of students through musical composition.

The following activities comprised the workshop program:

1. Composition of original musical works by each student at his own level.

2. Reading of all works by professional caliber performers employed on a part-time basis for this purpose.

3. Criticism of the works by workshop participants and director, and visiting composers.

4. Public performance of selected works at the end of the workshop period.

5. Lectures, a concert, and discussions led by two well-known visiting composers (Mr. Ingolf Dahl and Dr. Grant Beglarian).

6. Evaluation by discussion and questionnaires to ascertain the growth of the participants.

Subjects

The participants in the workshop came from two groups: 1) pre-service teachers, both graduate and undergraduate, who had completed the usual lower division music theory courses, and 2) in-service teachers returning for summer study. It was hoped that a special project of this type would attract a large sampling of musicians, including many who had never previously studied composition; however, due in part to the late funding and announcement of the workshop, all but one of the students were composers of some experience. The number of full-time participants was seven.

Data and Instrumentation

The data sought by this study, growth in musical skills and knowledge resulting from the specific subject area of composition, is not subject to exact measurement. It was decided, therefore, to have each student rate himself in the following areas:

1. Breadth of musical knowledge.
2. Level of musicianship (primarily aural skills).
3. Creative skill.
4. Ability to synthesize diverse aspects of musical learning.
5. Understanding and appreciation of the processes of musical creation.
6. Understanding of the structure of music.
7. Ability to assimilate and evaluate new music.
8. Ability to present music to others.
9. Performance ability, especially conducting.
10. Overall level of musical perception, understanding, and appreciation.

Each participant rated his growth on a scale of three: (1) significant growth, (2) moderate growth, and (3) no ascertainable growth. Since all participants had earlier composition experience, they were asked also to indicate which of the areas had been enlightened by their previous works. (The complete questionnaire is given in the appendix.)

RESULTS

The Discussions

The final session of the Composition Workshop for Composers and Teachers was devoted to a discussion of the values of creative work for the teacher. This discussion was led by visiting composer Grant Beglarian and ranged over a wide variety of music and pedagogical topics, and conclusions to be drawn from it are necessarily vague. General agreement was expressed by members of the group on the following points:

1. All music students, pre-professional or not, should be exposed to contemporary music early and often.

2. Creative work in music is challenging and difficult, but satisfying even if it teaches only the difficulties facing the professional composer.

3. Original composition should be incorporated somewhere in the undergraduate years, but the problem is how to make room for it, especially in the already crowded music education curriculum.

The Questionnaire

During February and March of 1969, each participant of the workshop submitted a questionnaire, rating his growth as a result of the workshop in ten specified musical areas. Since the number of subjects was relatively small, a description of their present position and their answers to each question are given here.

The seven workshop students are currently occupied (1968-69) as follows:

1. Undergraduate student (voice).

2. Music coordinator in a city of 20,000.

3. Undergraduate student (music education).

4. Music instructor in a parochial high school.

5. Junior high instrumental teacher.

6. Theory instructor in a private college.

7. Junior high instrumental teacher.

Their self-ratings in each area are given in the order of the above listing. The numbers denote: 1) significant progress in the stated area, 2) moderate progress, 3) no particular progress, and 0) no answer.

The areas and ratings were as follows:

1. Breadth of musical knowledge: 1-2-1-1-2-2-2 (average: 1.6).

2. Level of musicianship (particularly aural skills): 1-1-2-2-3-3-2 (average: 2).

3. Creative skill: 1-1-1-3-1-2-1 (average: 1.4).

4. Ability to synthesize diverse aspects of musical learning: 2-1-2-2-3-2-2 (average: 2).

5. Understanding and appreciation of musical creation: 1-1-1-1-2-2-1 (average: 1.3).

6. Understanding of the nature of music: 1-1-1-2-2-3-1: (average: 1.6).

7. Ability to assimilate and evaluate new music: 2-1-1-2-2-2-2 (average: 1.7).

8. Ability to present all styles of music to others (as to a school appreciation class or performing group): 2-1-2-3-3-2-1 (average: 2).

9. Performance ability, especially conducting: 0-1-3-3-3-3-3 (average: 2.7).

10. Overall level of musical perception, understanding, and appreciation: 1-1-1-2-2-2-2 (average: 1.6).

These self-ratings are the most concrete evidence furnished by this study. The averages quoted show that, in nine of ten areas of musical learning that might reasonably be expected to be helped by a study of composition, these seven students reported at least moderate growth from a very short course of three weeks. In the two areas closest to actual composition, those of creative skill and the understanding of musical creation, the ratings were understandably the highest, averaging 1.4 and 1.3 respectively. In three other areas, understanding the nature of music, the ability to assimilate and evaluate new music, and the overall level of musical perception, the self-ratings averaged above the level of "moderate progress."

The remaining questions were designed to elicit from the students their feelings regarding their earlier compositional experience and their opinions on including composition in

undergraduate study.

Following are the questions and a summary of the answers to each:

11. Of the first ten items in which you listed little progress, which, in your opinion, would be helped by a full semester or more of composition study?

Of the total twelve "3" or "no progress" self-ratings given, six were listed here as being probably helped by the longer period of study.

12. Are there areas in which composition study has been particularly helpful in your teaching? If so, list them as specifically as possible.

The answers in this case were rather vague to be of special interest, but several among the active teachers noted that composition's contribution to their overall musical perception has in turn helped their instructional skills.

13. As a result of all your composition study, do you believe that at least one semester of composition should be required for some (or all) Bachelor of Music Education degrees?

Of five catagorical answers to this question, four were "yes", one "no", with two specifying <u>all</u> students. Several answers mentioned the difficulties that less gifted students might face.

14. If your answer to question 13 is yes, do you believe that certain other areas in the Bachelor of Music Education curriculum should be curtailed to make room for composition study?

No general agreement resulted here except on the difficulty of the problem. Only one student suggested the curtailing of education courses, and most hoped for the inclusion of composition study in other courses already being offered, such as theory, history, or analysis.

15. For the final item please give any views or comments on the 1968 workshop in particular, or in the larger question of composition study for the music educator, that have not been included in previous answers.

Here the comments were rather protracted and filled with firm opinions. The point most often mentioned was the <u>insight</u> into all musical areas provided by the study of composition, a general feeling that this study does indeed confer benefits not gotten elsewhere.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions to be drawn from this study are quite evident, and bear out the opening hypothesis - that composition study is uniquely beneficial to the music education student. The most concrete evidence is furnished by the self-rating in the ten growth areas: if the subjects, on the average, considered they made moderate progress or better in nine of ten areas in a period of only three weeks, it is reasonable to conclude that a longer course of study would be a valuable addition to the music education curricula in American colleges and universities.

Perhaps almost as significant are the unanimously enthusiastic answers to the free comment final question. All of the students, whatever their level of musical maturity, felt that the study of composition had contributed importantly to their progress.

The principal finding of this study is, therefore, that in this one test project the values of composition study were clearly demonstrable to the students themselves.

Remaining to be solved is the difficult problem of how to fit one more area into an already overcrowded course of study. Possible solutions, aside from curtailing any courses now being offered, include the use of original work in the present harmony training in the lower division years, or its incorporation into the upper division courses such as analysis or orchestration. These questions, however, remain to be worked out by theorists and composers now teaching in American colleges and universities. It is possible that research utilizing a longer period of time and a larger group of subjects could find more definite ways and means. But, in any case, it seems likely that the growing interest in creativity will continue to influence musical training in this country.

APPENDIX

Questionnaire and Programs

Questionnaire for Members of the 1968 Composers' Workshop
Kansas State Teachers College
Music Department
February 1969

To:

Dear Workshop Member:

In order to help us evaluate the effectiveness of last summer's Composition Workshop for Composers and Teachers, we are asking each participant in the workshop to fill out the following questionnaire. We hope that your answers will be completely candid and will represent your true feelings on the subject. Please feel free to omit items that have little bearing, and to comment, on additional paper, if necessary, on any items that seem especially important to you.

We will be grateful if your questionnaire can be returned promptly - within a few days if possible.

Nelson Keyes, Workshop Director

B. A. Nugent, Head
Department of Music

Name_____

Permanent Address_____

_____

Type of Position (1968-69)____

_____

The first ten items are fields of musical knowledge or skills that can reasonably be expected to be cultivated by a study of composition. You are asked to evaluate your own progress in each area as a direct result of the 1968 workshop on the following scale:

(1) Significant progress
(2) Moderate progress
(3) No particular progress

1. Breadth of musical knowledge.
2. Level of musicianship (particularly aural skills).
3. Creative skill.
4. Ability to synthesize diverse aspects of musical learning.
5. Understanding and appreciation of the process of musical creation.

6. Understanding the nature of music.
7. Ability to assimilate and evaluate new music.
8. Ability to present all styles of music to others (as to a school appreciation class or performance group).
9. Performance ability, particularly conducting.
10. Overall level of musical perception, understanding, and appreciation.

The remainder of questions should be answered as you wish, briefly or at length.

11. Of the first ten items in which you listed little or no progress, which, in your opinion as a result of your workshop experience, would probably be improved by one or more full semesters of composition study?
12. Are there areas, not covered in the first ten items, in which composition study has been particularly helpful in your own teaching? If so, would you list them here, as specifically as possible.
13. As a result of all your composition study, do you believe that at least one or more semesters of composition study should be required for some (or all) Bachelor of Music Education degrees?
14. If your answer to question 13 is yes, do you believe that certain other areas in the Bachelor of Music Education curriculum should be curtailed to make room for composition studies? If so, can you suggest the areas or courses to curtail or eliminate?
15. For the final item, please give any views or comments on the 1968 workshop in particular, or on the larger question of composition study for the music educator, that have not been included in previous answers.

1968 COMPOSERS' WORKSHOP
THE KANSAS STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE
OF EMPORIA
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

presents

INGOLF DAHL, Composer & Conductor
Assisted by
The KSTC Woodwind Quintet
and
Members, Fellows, and Friends
of the
1968 Composers' Workshop
in a
Concert of Contemporary Music

Sunday, July 28, 1968
Beach Music Hall
3:00 p.m.

PROGRAM

Divertimento No. 2 . . . . . Gail Kubik

Allegro and Arioso for Woodwind Quintet (1943) . . . . . Dahl

Sonata Pastorale (1959) . . . . . Dahl
Performed by the composer

Intermission

Lauda, for Mixed Chorus . . . . . Harold Shapero

Antiphon for String Quartet, Brass Quartet,
and Mixed Chorus . . . . . David Carney

Metropolitan Bus Cantata . . . . . Harold Owen

In Praise of Music . . . . . Hindemith

Psalm 150 . . . . . Donald Aird

THE KANSAS STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
presents

A RECITAL OF MUSIC
WRITTEN IN THE 1968 COMPOSERS' WORKSHOP

Wednesday, July 31, 1968
Beach Music Hall
8:15 p.m.

PROGRAM

Trumpet Piece in Two Movements . . . . . Tom Kutina
K. Roger Dill, Trumpet; Diann Daniel, piano; Charles Hiebert and Corliss Johnson, percussion

Duo for Flute and Bassoon . . . . . Patrice Angle
Allegro
Very slow
Vif
Esther Stegeman, flute; Theresa Turley, bassoon

Two Pieces for Three Woodwinds . . . . . Corliss Johnson
Esther Stegeman, flute; Theresa Turley, bassoon; Corliss Johnson, clarinet

Trio for Brass Instruments . . . . . N. Keyes
K. Roger Dill, trumpet; David Kingsley, horn; Dennis Plank, trombone

Five Piano Pieces . . . . . Sister Lucille Lammers
Diann Daniel, piano

Moods for Flute, Violin, and Cello . . . . . Mariette Simpson
Pensive
Jaunty
Esther Stegeman, flute; Mariette Simpson, violin; Hector Cortes, cello

Trombone Duet . . . . . Tim Johnson
Dennis Plank and Tim Johnson, trombones

Short 'n' Suite . . . . . Tim Johnson

Septem Suite . . . . . Dennis Plank
Intrada
Little March
Air
Finale
K. Roger Dill and John Laing, trumpets; Ken Dixon, fleugelhorn; David Kingsley, horn; Brooke Ostrander, baritone; Tim Johnson, trombone; Albert Fitzgerrel, tuba